

DUPLICATE STITCH on Knit Fabric – Also Known as SWISS DARNING as taught by Beth Watkins



Duplicate Stitch is an embroidery method used on knit fabric to create a design which is accomplished by “tracing the path of the original fabric’s knit stitches” with an identical thickness of yarn in a contrasting color or colors. It is worked “on top” or “across the surface” of a completed knit fabric.

Duplicate Stitch is most often used as a “planned” or “afterthought” way to decorate the surface of an otherwise plain knit fabric, creating the look of Fair Isle or intarsia. But it is much easier as it does not require multiple strands or colors to be held, manipulated, or carried at the same time as you knit your project. With this method, you may use a single contrast color, or many, to suit your desired design.

In your initial practice piece(s), it might be wise to use two highly contrasting colors to better see how the duplicate stitches will lay and if they will need to be adjusted tighter or looser in order to properly “conceal” the underlying stitch(es) you are duplicating. One color for the swatch and the other for the duplicate stitches.

For your practice piece, knit a solid color swatch of stocking stitch fabric, including garter stitch borders on all 4 sides (large enough to prevent edge rolling) and provide enough knit surface for your chosen design. Then choose a contrasting color for your duplicate stitching. Using a very light color for the swatch and a dark color for the duplicate stitches, or vice versa, will work best for learning purposes. Once comfortable with the method, you may use any color or combination of colors you desire.

Using a bodkin or blunt point needle to create your duplicate stitch design will help avoid splitting or snagging your knit fabric. Cut a length of contrast colored yarn approximately 18 to 24” long, then thread your chosen tool. It is NOT recommended to work with a longer length due to the possibility of twisting, tangling, knotting, and/or wear and tear on the yarn or fabric as you draw the yarn through your fabric. If the yarn is constantly twisting or tangling, it may be too long. You can remedy some of that by cutting shorter lengths and/or by periodically dropping the tool and allowing the yarn to untwist itself before continuing with your duplicate stitching. Depending on your design, cut additional lengths, as needed, rather than cutting them too long.

Matching the size and thickness of duplicate stitch yarn with the underlying knit fabric will give the best results. If the duplicate yarn chosen is too small/thin, the design will get lost in the fabric. If the duplicate yarn chosen is too thick, it will likely distort your knit fabric. Although you can use different densities or textures to create a design with special effects, these instructions are intended for making an exact duplicate stitch to appear as if it had been knit directly into the fabric as it was created.

Watch your tension!! Loosen or tighten stitches as you go and take special care not to split your fabric stitches. If you do, immediately pull/pick out the offending stitch(es) before continuing with your work. If your yarn begins to twist or tangle, drop the needle/bodkin and allow the yarn to untwist before proceeding.

Decide on your design and its preferred placement on your fabric or project. Count the number of stitches required to create your design within that area and mark the design center. You may mark your

fabric, design free hand, or use a charted design. Duplicate stitches are usually worked in the same direction that your fabric was knitted and can be done on any knit fabric with matching density yarns.

Starting at the bottom corner of your designated design area, place your threaded tool in the back of your fabric. Then draw threaded tool (to the front) through the bottom of the first knit stitch of your design and trace the path of each knit stitch you wish to duplicate. Then move up to the next row of stitches. Maintain the identical stretchy tension of your fabric and repeat duplicating the desired stitches (but in the opposite direction) covering each stitch in your planned design. Remember to keep your duplicate stitch tension even to match the underlying fabric. Your design stitches should sit smoothly atop the fabric and match the stretch of the knit fabric you are duplicating. To better shape the edges of your design, you may make “half” stitches by following only half of the adjoining stitch, similar to doing counted cross stitch over a canvas of knit stitches.

TIPS, HINTS, & LINKS....

Duplicate stitch is usually done by tracing the typical “V” shape of a knit stitch but can also be done using the “A” shape made by the sides of each “V” stitch.

Duplicate stitch can also be used to correct mistakes, make repairs, or even “fix” underlying split stitches in a knit fabric.

Use as many or as few colors as desired to create your chosen design(s) but make sure you secure the tails through the matching color(s) on the back of your fabric.

If you intend to submit your work for “judging”, make sure your duplicate stitches “exactly” match the path of the underlying stitches and do not twist/cross at the bottom of the “V” but remain open like a normal knit stitch!! Good luck! I want to see your “winning” project and the ribbons!

There are many helpful internet sites, blogs, and YouTube videos to aid you. I have listed just a few suggestions to get you started but please do your own research to find those instructions that best fit your learning style.

Suggested Searches: “Duplicate Stitch” or “Swiss Darning” for Tutorials
“Intarsia vs. Duplicate Stitch”

Sites and Videos: Goodknitkisses.com
Verypink.com (great for many methods and stitches of all kinds)

Arenda Holladay blog “We are knitters”

Pinterest: Purl Soho – Duplicate Stitch and A stitches vs. V stitches
Lots of other links and graphed designs are available for free or at a small cost



To make your own graphed designs, search for “Knitting Graph Paper”. Some are available as free printable sheets. Others have a small cost. They can be printed/designed portrait or landscape style. Purchase or print blank OR design your own online and then print out your completed graphed design.

